Going Out, Not Coming Out:

Queer Affects, Secluded Publics, and Palestinian Hip-Hop

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Abstract

In an effort to a draw attention to queer, Palestinian cultural practices that resist homonationalism and colonialism, this paper begins as a conversation between the fields of Palestine studies and scholarship on sexuality and passing in order to identify the important relationship between, on the one hand, aesthetics and movement in public spaces and, on the other hand, Palestinian social life and identity formation. The conversation then shifts to grounded theorizations of two key elements of queer hip-hop: "going out" as a resistant, queer, and Palestinian practice intimately tied to identity, space, and place; and "secluded publics," built environments that materialize queer affects and eroticism through dance.

Keywords: Palestine studies, hip-hop, queer theory, affect studies, cultural geography, secluded publics

Research on U.S.-based hip-hop has systematically engaged in lyrical analysis as a key approach to understanding why people participate in hip-hop cultural practices, an approach which has correctly identified tensions between hip-hop and feminist and LGBTQ politics. [1] Miles away from the productive spaces of U.S. hip-hop, Palestinian queer activist and scholar Haneen Maikey describes a different set of constraints on women's and LGBTQ self-representation, namely how "the unique social, historical, and political situation of Palestinians—the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza and decades of discrimination against Palestinians in Israel—has created real obstacles for advancing respect for sexual and gender diversity in Palestinian society, which has not had the same opportunities to grow and evolve as many other societies have" (600-601). Nonetheless, Palestinians are actively creating and (re)establishing hip-hop spaces for queer folk within which queer affinities and eroticism form and flourish. To help clarify the apparent contradiction between a sexist and homophobic hip-hop lyrical history and the contemporary construction of a queer, Palestinian hip-hop scene, I contend that an attention to differential consumption practices, and not simply the lyrical, representational

[1] See, for example, Rebollo-Gil and Moras (2012), Adams and Fuller (2006), and Weitzer and Kubrin (2009) for longer discussions of the sexist portrayal of women in hip-hop lyrics and the related topic of Black masculinity.

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construction of songs, helps elucidate the capacities of listeners to reformulate and embody hip-hop practices in progressive, counter cultural, or anti-normative ways.

This essay engages the development of scholarship concerned with embodiment and affect in order to suggest that the study of music practices must be concerned with how hip-hop is practiced as an identity and affinity forming enterprise, a theoretical relationship that has been scantly developed (See Roberts). This suggestion is not without scholarly precedent, as the intersecting fields of cultural studies and sound studies have become a formidable site of work on affect (See Goodman), and is meant to reflect a grounded theorization of Palestinian hip-hop as experienced by myself and those with whom I had the good fortune to spend time, and is further intended to elucidate how hip-hop practices (in)form embodied, Palestinian identities. In Palestine studies, scholarship on Palestinian identity formation tends to focus, through a range of methods, methodologies, and foundational concepts, on the representational aspects of ethno-religious and nationalist identities. This focus and the consequent elision of intersectional approaches to gender and sexuality ignore the ways through which Palestinians differentially embody and feel, rather than just think, their identities. Regarding Palestinian cultural studies, a scholarly preoccupation with older cultural forms contributes further to this elision at a time when new and notably transnational cultural practices, such as hip-hop production and consumption, help generate prefigurative, queer affinities with the aim of challenging patriarchal and homophobic norms within Palestinian society, despite a comparative lack of explicitly female and LGBTQ-positive lyrics from Palestinian artists. Taking these themes in Palestinian hip-hop praxis as a provocation to investigate the ways Palestinian identities form through participation in hip-hop practices and spaces, I move away from strictly representational, ethno-religious, and nationalist conceptions of Palestinian identity to more intersectional, hybrid, affective, and queer conceptions, ones that help elucidate the differential processes involved in Palestinian identity formation.

This essay specifically prioritizes a spatial approach to Palestinian queer identity formation that foregrounds *where* hip-hop practices take place and their relationship to sexuality and affect. In an attempt to describe a differential, anti-essentialist, and affective construction of queer Palestinian identity, I focus on the role of space and place in the formation of identity through hip-hop practices in Haifa, Israel. This focus has its antecedents in literature on Palestinian public space, mobility, and visibility, in addition to scholarship on sexuality and passing. I begin with a review of those antecedents, producing a conversation between the fields of Palestinian cultural studies and queer geography in order to identify the important role of public space in practices of identity formation and (decolonial) Palestinian resistance. The focus then shifts to the theories grounded in my fieldwork in Haifa, including mapping projects, interviews with artists and activists, and participatory research at hip-hop shows. Two themes emerge from this research that merit attention: "going out" as a resistant, queer, and Palestinian practice intimately tied to identity, space, and place, and the role of the built environment in hip-hop spaces that I term "secluded publics," a role which facilitates queer eroticism.

I. A Queer/Palestinian Geography of Public Space

The modern history of Palestinian public space takes the growth of political Zionism in Palestine as a geopolitical turning point, involving the forced movement of Palestinians to rural areas (Shafir 41-44), the establishment of (new) urban centers for Jews (Rotbard 122-23), and the narration of settlement and development of a "land without a people" (Masalha 61-62). The expansion of Zionism necessitated a form of historic revisionism materialized through a new geography and toponymy that Nur Masalha describes as historicizing the natural place of Jews in Palestine, physically and discursively. The destruction of Palestinian towns and villages was just one material dimension of this transition, mirrored in a discursive attempt to rename cities and streets with Hebrew names, many of which glorified early leaders of the Zionist movement in Palestine (Azaryahu and Cook 185-86). In Haifa, this is perhaps best represented by one of the nightlife centers, Ben Gurion Street, named after Israel's first prime minister, founder of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and former leader of the World Zionist Organization, who was also noted for encouraging the "Judaization of Haifa" (Goren 135).

Palestinian identity formation is intimately tied to engagements with public spaces, like Ben Gurion Street, where Palestinians navigate shifting regimes of mobility and visibility (Wagner 1-2). The various geopolitical machinations and practices of the Israeli state have considerably constricted the mobility of many Palestinians. Security checkpoints and other means of restricting travel to Palestinians in Palestine and Israel are commonplace. Thus, the theme of (im)mobility in scholarship on Palestinian identity and space highlights the role of settler colonialism in the geo-cultural imaginaries and daily lives of Palestinians and therefore the relational nature of Palestinian identity formation to different practices that engage with public space. More specifically, Wagner's work indicates that the utilization of public space can be a resistant and identitarian endeavor, often performing and materializing what has been termed a "right to the city" (Mitchell 17-21). The theme of visibility further addresses the varying cultural norms of Palestinians pertaining to public space. The questions of who is permissibly visible, how, and where provide insight into Palestinian cultural norms pertaining to gender, sexuality, and class. For example, Mokarram Abbas and Bas van Heur describe three factors that play into the experience of women in public space, space audience (who is seeing), spatial opportunities (what is permissible in those spaces), and space organization (1225-26). Similarly, other scholars have identified the role of privacy for women as integral to their level of comfort engaging with public spaces (Al-Bishawi, Ghadban, and Jorgensen 1561-63). These same understandings of visibility and gender map well onto the experiences of queer Palestinians for whom different spaces offer different levels of comfort and encourage different ways of seeing and being seen. Visibility in Palestine is thus an intersubjective concern, involving visual displays and ways of seeing, which help differentiate among Palestinian experiences of public space informed by gender and sexuality. The themes of mobility and visibility offer a way of considering the importance of using public space as a form of resistance against settler colonial, sexist, and homophobic practices that render Palestinians differentially (im)mobile and (in)visible.

This visibility-mobility dynamic in scholarship on Palestinian public space has been well developed in regards to Palestinian ethno-religious and national identity, as well as to gender norms internal to Palestinian society, yet has only been recently taken up to study sexuality and public space in Israel-Palestine (see Wagner and Ritchie). However, sexual identity among Palestinians also involves questions of visibility: what displays or performances are permissible, and who can safely see you performing a non-normative sexual identity? Ben Gurion Street provides an excellent example of this in Haifa. If you are a new heterosexual couple in Haifa, Ben Gurion Street is a public space in which visibly performing your relationship takes on special meaning. If you are seen there with a potential partner, it indicates that you are officially together, publicly, and thus in line with the dictates of traditional Palestinian relationship norms, what Alana Bannourah terms "implied marriage" ("Confessions of a Palestinian Christian Girl"). However, Ben Gurion Street does not offer the same experience to sexual-minority, queer Palestinians, whose relationship to public spaces and practices of mobility and visibility are affected by Palestinian heteronormativity. Thus, queer Palestinians embody a differential subjectivity that must simultaneously navigate relations of ethnic discrimination *and* Palestinian heteronormativity. Roy Wagner helps highlight this in his discussion of a 2006 LGBT pride event in Jerusalem, when the police decided to remove protection from the event due to the focus at the time on conflicts in Gaza: "[Palestinian] LGBTs did move through the streets of Jerusalem on November 10, 2006; but those recognizable as manifesting pride, seeking LGBT visibility, were denied mobility…LGBTs had to choose between mobility and visibility" (4).

While Tel-Aviv offers a number of explicitly coded gay places, a fact often touted in pinkwashing literature on the regional exceptionalism of Israeli LGBTQ politics (Papantonopoulou 278-79), those places are often policed with larger ethno-religious ideologies. Jason Ritchie's work on the politics of visibility in queer Palestinian and Israeli social life highlights the policing of ethno-religious identity and state belonging within gay bars in Israel. Discussing an event where he and an Arab friend were turned away from a Tel Aviv gay bar, Ritchie describes how:

> "that moment cast into sharp relief the discursive framework that governs sexuality and race in Israel-Palestine: the entrance to the bar was a sort of checkpoint, like so many others queer Palestinians regularly face, in bars, saunas, parks, Web sites, and other 'egalitarian' gay spaces; it was manned by a queer agent of Israeli nationalism, whose job it was to determine who belongs in this gay/Israeli space and who does not" (557).

Ritchie continues to build on criticisms of gay visibility, extending a metaphor of the checkpoint to help contextualize the fraught desirability and feasibility of "coming out" narratives for Palestinians living in Israel. Thus, Ritchie concludes:

> "While the dream of 'coming out of the closet' into full citizenship and national belonging drives the activism of many queer Israelis, the violence of the checkpoint

> — and countless other reminders of the impossibility of belonging (not to mention 'citizenship') — shapes the strategies of queer Palestinian activists" (558).

Wagner similarly describes a "double-passing" that occurs for some visibly queer Palestinians who receive the protection of the Israeli military or individual Israelis when going to LGBTQ events in Israel (12). Wagner contends that these practices are premised on the denial of an active queer, Palestinian social scene, that allows one's "gay visibility to take over his Palestinian visibility" (12). Thus, Wagner's notion of double-passing helps demonstrate the linked ideologies behind pinkashing (vis-a-vis the "regional exceptionalism" of Israel's LGBTQ policies) and Ritchie's subject-hailing checkpoint, ideologies that recirculate Orientalist depictions of anachronistic Palestinian sexual mores.

As young Palestinians assert a queer *and* Palestinian identity in public space, they challenge the normative association of queerness with Israel and homophobia with Palestine, refusing to pass as Israeli or as straight. Part of the queer intervention in literature on sexual passing, which moved it away from a strict focus on strategic passing as straight and/or cisgender, has been in the focus on acts of disruption, performances of the self that challenge binary and other normative ideologies of gender and sexuality, rather than negotiate around and through them. Leanne Dawson concisely explains that "it is those who either cannot or choose not to pass, and therefore present a disruptive surface text, who have been most celebrated in queer theory, despite the fact that failing to pass can have serious socio-political consequences" (206). Further challenging this binary approach to acts of and scholarship on passing, Rachel Devitt's work on gender performances at drag and burlesque shows weaves together staged femme performances directed at both passing and what she terms ambivalence. Drawing from Jose Muñoz' work on disidentification and strategic misrecognition, Devitt writes of "a kind of passing that is not necessarily focused on a believable performance, but rather on a 'tactical misrecognition of self' that both invokes a racialised, classed and/or gendered archetype and challenges its limit(ation)s" (438). Devitt's definition foregrounds a critique of the supposed stability and naturalness of gender and sexual identity categories, while recognizing their important roles in structuring social life. While Devitt's work is focused on staged performances in queer, coded spaces, it resonates well with queer Palestinian practices of passing through public space. One of the people whom I interviewed, a queer Haifa resident who frequents hip-hop shows, described how their attention to grooming their beard and donning clean and fashionable clothing often gains them the praise of a heteronormative public gaze. People they know who they pass in public praise them for being so well put together and attractive, reading their aesthetic as an endorsement of and engagement with heteronormative gender performance. These practices of grooming and dressing well are commonplace for straight Palestinian men, thus, in the moment of passing through and as, many queer Palestinian men embody the liminality of Palestinian heteronormative mobility and visibility dynamics.

Returning to Wagner's framing of the visibility-mobility dynamic, I find that work on passing focuses heavily on visibility, on the ocular, defining passing as something akin to "*appearing* to be something you are not" (Devitt 430, emphasis added). While the ocular is a

primary means through which information or cues about gender and sexuality are gathered, this approach reduces passing to a mere negotiation of prevailing modes of ocular policing, leaving aside the very motivations for entering and moving through public, potentially threatening spaces. In foregrounding the prevailing ocular modes of policing gender and sexuality, and the respondent modes of survival queer Palestinians employ, scholars stand to miss the implication that, for queer and other marginalized peoples, engaging public space involves more than just a tactical way of surviving harassment, but is also a way of constructing one's identity. Aesthetic and kinesthetic passings emerge in ways that simultaneously navigate constraints on mobility and visibility, while challenging them, what Wagner describes as "realigning, rather than strictly suppressing forms of visibility" (4). That is, the discussion of constrictions on visibility gay men face often implies an original, authentic gay aesthetic that is naturally desired by gay men everywhere. The colonial implication of this−that places where queer people do not mirror (Western) gay and lesbian aesthetics must do so due to systemic homophobia−is under-examined in literature dealing with sexual identity, queerness, and the Middle East. Thus, with regard to Devitt's conceptualization of passing that invokes "a racialised, classed and/or gendered archetype and challenges its limit(ation)s" (438), queer Palestinian practices of passing through space challenge the ocular logic of a boundary between the West/Israel as liberal and the East/Palestine as homophobic.

The literature on passing approaches public space largely as a gauntlet of potentially unknown modes of harassment that must be tactically navigated and survived. To pass quickly and tactically through public spaces and ignore people who might pose difficulty to you, has a particularly metropolitan feel to it, evoking stereotypes of a New York sidewalk, filled with the hustle and bustle of commuters trying to make it quickly to work. Depending on what neighborhood you are moving through, many queer Palestinians might need to be prepared to run into multiple people they know, and to perform and pass a version of themselves that will impress or appease the person they are talking to, thereby allowing their movement, their passing through. These recognition of the tendency to run into people you know also helps clarify one aspect of the queer, Palestinian apprehension of Western coming out practice. In one of my interviews with an organizer with Al-Qaws (The Rainbow), a Palestinian LGBTQ organization, the organizer described a useful metaphor comparing the different social landscapes of the U.S. versus Palestine, and their consequent effect on modes of queer identity formation. They likened being "in the closet" to being in a physically and socially constrictive space, described as being surrounded by a circular wall. When you come out in the U.S., they said, you ultimately dismantle that wall and stare out at a now open world of possibility. In Israel-Palestine, by contrast, the dismantling of the wall, the act of coming out, reveals yet another wall waiting behind the first. He described that wall as a new network of gossip, micro-aggressions, and other forms of policing that affect not only you, but also those who associate with you, providing the example of one of your mother's co-workers interrogating her about her gay son.

While the first part of the example, of an open world of possibility acquired through coming out in the U.S., is by no means an apt capture of the realities of U.S. queers who navigate extant homophobia, the second part sheds light on how imbricated identity formation is with public space

in Palestine. Combined with Ritchie's metaphor of the checkpoint, it is no surprise that, as opposed to the Western logic of coming-out narratives and practices, "queer Palestinians articulate a politics of social change that offers a potentially subversive alternative to the normalizing project of queer visibility" (Ritchie 558). Thus, the study of queer Palestinian practices of going out is a study of identity formation absent the declarative practice of coming out and the forms of state and citizenship-based interpellation that attend it. Coming out offers a framework for understanding, but not a monopoly on affecting, queer socialization and affinity. The proceeding sections begin to lay out an alternative framework, that of going out, as attendant to Palestinian practices of queer socialization in public spaces that offer critically important modes of seclusion.

II. Going Out, Coming Out

Going out can be the highlight of the week for young, queer Palestinians who attend hip-hop and other contemporary music shows in Haifa. While hip-hop by no means is the sole site of queer socialization in Haifa,[2] the rapidly growing hip-hop scene in Haifa means that you can find a hip-hop show almost every week. Combined with the fact that hip-hop venues have a queer appeal due to their association with counter-cultural and underground socialization (for example, feminist, socialist, anti-racist), hip-hop shows are attractive to, and sometimes organized by, considerable numbers of queer Palestinians. For instance, Haifa's Scene Bar (discussed below), is operated by two women who actively market women-identified and LGBTQ, hip-hop events. Going out becomes a language in and of itself, a way of communicating one's location and authenticity in the social scene of Haifa. As argued in the preceding section, the acts of passing as and passing through are important parts of the experience of going out, partnered with the socialization that takes place in hip-hop shows themselves. This section therefore approaches going out as involving two contrasting aesthetics and kinesthetic, visibility and movement to the venue in contrast to within the venue. The forms of aesthetic cultivation for and comportment through both of these spaces, the public space of the street and the secluded public of the venue, highlight the different pressures queer Palestinians face when going out and the reactive and proactive modes of socialization.

Given the high likelihood of interacting with family, colleagues, or other acquaintances when walking to the music venues, queer Palestinians might engage in flexible forms of aesthetic cultivation to prepare for going out. The various aesthetics associated with hip-hop cultural practices in the U.S. are rarely seen in Palestine, normally reserved for the artists and die-hard adherents, rather than the mass of attendees at a show. The outfits you see at a hip-hop show could just as easily be seen at an electronic dance music (EDM) show or at a fancy restaurant, and it is common for young people to attend multiple shows and go to dinner with friends in a single night. This flexible mode of aesthetic cultivation can cross physical and cultural boundaries, making it

[2] Bars, coffee shops, art shows/festivals, and electronic dance music shows also constitute major sites of queer socialization and cultural praxis in Haifa, with the downtown area and Massada Street being particularly important to a queer spatial imaginary of the city.

convenient for queer Palestinians who want to go out to navigate public spaces with comfort. One interviewee remarked that his straight friends take more time to groom themselves for going out and often wore nicer and more feminine dress. Another interviewee and friend said that they get compliments from family friends who often remark that he should "meet their daughter" or ask how he is not yet married, and he enjoyed remarking on the irony of the situation. His interactions with the parents of young women render visible the instability of hetero aesthetics as he passes as and passes through Haifa's streets.

Modes of movement compliment the role of visibility in acts of going out, as being seen takes place while moving to and through certain neighborhoods en route to the hip-hop venue. Queer Palestinians employ a number of tactics to pass quickly through public spaces, without ignoring the interpellative acts of hailing that might take place from friends' parents, co-workers, or other acquaintances. One respondent described a group approach, wherein a small group of friends will meet at one house and walk together to a show. One benefit of this is to avoid parental scrutiny before leaving the home, as her parents feel better knowing she is with a group of friends and not alone. She further described how this helps avoid two unwanted interactions in public. In the case that someone whom she does not know, or who knows that she is queer, should want to harass them, being in a group helps quell that potentiality. That harassment, she remarked, might also include men's unwanted sexual advances, which are less common if she is in a larger group. Similarly, since she will likely run into someone she knows, being in a group gives her an excuse to say a quick hello and goodbye without being expected to stop and make small talk. Another interviewee, the one who remarked on the propositions he receives from parents on behalf of their daughters, aptly described the connection between passing as and passing through. When in comfortable spaces, including hip-hop venues, he likes to strut and intentionally draw the attention of partygoers. In the case of the outdoor public streets, he knows to walk in a masculine fashion, with a quick gait and avoiding crossing his thighs over each other as he moves. These two narratives further evidence the complicated imbrication of sexuality and gender as, for example, gay men and lesbian women, navigate different regimes of mobility and visibility structured in relation to prevailing norms of masculine and feminine gender performance. As street harassment and social judgment take different forms for men and women, so, too, do the modes of comportment and aesthetic cultivation used by men and women to pass.

Upon arriving in the space of the hip-hop venue, the shift in social norms immediately translates into varying practices of aesthetic cultivation and comportment. The pressure to appear as hetero while moving through heteronormative public space dissipates considerably, allowing queer Palestinians the freedom to complete the aesthetic transformation central to going out, a transformation that helps instantiate moments of queer socialization, moments of doing sexuality through displays and readings of queer sensibilities. Bathrooms in these venues become temporary dressing rooms, places where clothing and makeup receive additional modifications. A couple of my interviewees discussed bringing makeup with them to venues, knowing that it could bring additional scrutiny on the street, and that they would have to remove it before they left the venue. At some shows, going into the gender neutral bathrooms meant encountering small groups of men

and women who were removing articles of clothing, unbuttoning the tops of their shirts, replacing previously removed piercings, and applying glitter, eye-liner, and other makeup. In the mass of people who don similar styles of clothing, these final touches allow Palestinians to communicate a queer aesthetic to other partygoers. These final touches further evidence the co-extensive aspects of gender and sexuality-based regimes of visibility.

The movements within hip-hop venues similarly evidence a shift in regimes of mobility affected by changing spatial relations. While the next section takes up specific questions of dance and sexuality in the built environment of these secluded publics, some initial observations on movements as a performative embodiment of sexuality are worth mentioning. Modalities of visibility and movement allow partygoers to perform sexuality in ways that co-construct the spaces of hip-hop venues. In packed venues with sometimes upwards of one hundred attendees, the more you move, the more visible you become. Attendees have the option to sit in a corner, hardly noticed, in contrast to the option of dancing or moving in ways that make one visible, taking up space in ways that can (re)construct the venue itself as the materialization of queer potential. If Ben Gurion Street calls for particular gendered and sexuality-based movements, the hip-hop venue is comparatively freeing, allowing walks and sashays, leg crossings, and gesticulations that might draw unwanted ocular scrutiny and movement impeding harassment in other environments. During one hip-hop DJ set, a friend who attends many shows at the popular Kabareet and Scene bars, walked liked a model on a catwalk, crossing his thighs over each other with each step, before turning on a dime and walking the same distance back. In the midst of this movement, he turned his head to face a group of young men who were smiling and chuckling at his performance, jokingly yelling at them "Sorry straight boys, you can't have me. I'm gay!" My group of friends and the young men he had spoken with erupted into laughter at the performance, which immediately affected the environment in ways that signaled the continued loosening of the visibility and mobility regimes that lay in wait just outside the venue entrance.

The importance of publicity in these movements and visual displays is a key element in understanding going out as an identity forming practice. As per Wagner and Ritchie, mobility and visibility regimes in Israeli-Palestinian, public spaces render out, queer Palestinians subject to a range of checkpoints, from the West Bank wall to the entrance of a gay bar in Tel Aviv, which can deny one's Arab-ness predicated on their queerness, or deny their queerness predicated on their Arab-ness, materializing a gauntlet of obstacles highlighted in the metaphor of the closet as a set of circular walls. However, if mobility and visibility are two constitutive elements of what coming out purports to offer, then the hip-hop venue is a space where queer Palestinian partygoers have flexibility in performances that are not subject to the same ethno-religious, heteronormative, and gender normative regimes of visibility and mobility.

III. Secluded Publics

The two main sites of hip-hop in Haifa, Kabareet and Scene Bar, both offer regular shows, often including weekly appearances by DJs and rappers, and attract arguably the densest crowds

of any contemporary music venues in the city. The bars are located within a hundred yards of each other: Scene (a play on the English word Scene and the Arabic letter siin) on a street front corner, and Kabareet, in a more secluded location, down an alleyway off the same street. Though they cater to the same crowd of young Palestinians, the construction and aesthetic of the bars differ, with Scene, as the English name would suggest, offering a vibe more akin to a nightclub, while Kabareet looks and feels more like an underground coffeehouse turned bar. Neither venue can be viewed easily from the outside: the windows at Scene are mostly blacked out, and Kabareet's only windows face to an outside patio also hidden from public view. This construction is functional for queer Palestinian such that both venues offer what I term *secluded publics*, built environments that exist at the periphery of the nightlife center and yet whose construction offer seclusion from the regimes of visibility and mobility that are enforced publicly in the proximal downtown area. Secluded publics thus create the experience of liberation offered by being visibly and kinesthetically "out" in public, an experience both thought and felt. Queer practices of going out mobilize towards these spaces and are made visible within them. In Kabareet and Scene, a dynamic emerges between the affects of queer visibility and mobility and the affects of the built environment. It is not merely the discursive, cultural associations of these venues that attract and accommodate queer Palestinians, but the feel of them when filled with partygoers. They function at and as the periphery of the city center and offer a shift into different, non-hegemonic, though nonetheless encompassing, embodied and embedded, regimes of visibility and mobility. This section approaches the notion of secluded publics from two directions, first, the location of the venues within the city, both within and outside the popular nightlife areas, and second, within the venues, examining the queer, erotic dancing that take place within.

As the previous section highlights, queer Palestinians challenge gendered assumptions about appearance and movement through acts of passing as while passing through nightlife centers en route to Kabareet and Scene. Though both venues are approachable from one side without going through those centers, the people filling those streets are often on their way to the more mainstream nightlife center, without plans to stop in at either venue. As a result, many people walking by take notice of the small crowds formed in front of either venue, sometimes waiting to go in or smoking a cigarette, a public viewing that forms the last moment of ocular enforcement before one slips inside to a different visibility and mobility regime, a different, more secluded public. What is curious about this particular relationship between location, constructed space, and affect, is the recurrent metaphor of the checkpoint utilized by Ritchie to describe Palestinian experiences of entrances to gay bars in Tel Aviv. Certainly Scene and Kabareet have entrances that function as checkpoints. They typically have either security to check IDs or someone to check a guest list or take a cover fee. However, as both Ritchie's and this example suggest, the experience of the checkpoint is (in)formed by the differing regimes of mobility and visibility that exist on either side of that checkpoint, not solely by the various acts of checking practiced there. The built and practiced checkpoints of Kabareet and Scene, therefore, materialize the shift in regimes of mobility and visibility to a space outside/within, a shift that functions as and through embodied and embedded identities. More specifically, women and men experience the venue checkpoint

differently. As venue managers look to cultivate gendered and sexualized environments (e.g. ladies night, LGBTQ night), the bouncer often must assist the manager in that endeavor, deciding on appropriate numbers of men and women (as perceived by the bouncer) for the event.

As one moves into the venue, the excitement of a changing visibility and mobility regime is immediate. Indeed, much of this shift relies on the discursive meanings attached to the spaces; they are known both by their regulars and those who avoid them as counter-cultural spaces, where you are said to avoid judgment for being queer and/or Palestinian. However, one cannot separate the built environments of Kabareet and Scene from their exciting and transgressive feel. Scene is a two-tiered space, whose upper level overlooks the lower level, while offering a space with tables and chairs to sit for a drink or cigarette. The street level is open as a dance floor, the bar along one side and a DJ booth opposite the entrance. Kabareet sits off a long alleyway, which you turn from into a narrow path leading to the venue's entrance. The venue is split-level from the outside, with an entrance that takes you down about four feet to the inside, which, combined with the limestone archways throughout the venue, creates a feeling of being in a cave. Images of famous Palestinian artists and political figures and traditional Palestinian artwork decorate much of the space and a stage adorned with a rig for lighting sits on one end. Both venues are comparatively dark inside, perfect for dancing to a DJ set or live rapper, and characteristic of most dance venues across musical genres played in clubs, including hip-hop and EDM. Both venues also have a contrast between the center space of the dance area, where people are easily visible, and the edges, where small walls and alcoves offer more seclusion. Both places also have a culture of seclusion that extends within and beyond the spaces themselves and facilitates public eroticism. Photography of any sort in the venue is often prohibited in order to protect the identities and aesthetic and kinesthetic practices of venue goers. There is also an unspoken code of not discussing what was seen and done at the event with people who were not there, and certainly not with people who support the logic of heteronormative and gender normative regimes of visibility and mobility.

Dance figures heavily in hip-hop events in ways that further stress the important role of visibility and mobility in queer eroticism. The affectivity of dance and movement has been well studied in the EDM scene (See Collin and Godfrey; Fikentscher; Jackson; and Garcia), but similar studies have not been conducted at length within the context of hip-hop cultures.[3] Dance is an integral part of hip-hop practices, one of the oft-mentioned "four pillars of hip-hop": turn-tabling or DJ-ing, rapping, b-boying or breakdancing, and graffiti. Each of the pillars represents a different sensory enterprise, musical, vocal, kinesthetic, and aesthetic, respectively, with the last two harkening to the visibility-mobility dynamic. We might refer to a recurrence of kin(a)esthetics in EDM scholarship that highlights the imbrication of movement and visibility in dance practices, as dancers use visual cues from other people in order to attune their dance styles to the music, the built environment, and to the larger crowd of people. Garcia's study of the EDM scene explored the tactile function of music, highlighting "an important sensory–affective bridge between touch, sonic experience, and an expansive sense of connection in dancing crowds" (60). Garcia's work describes EDM venues as "spaces of heightened tactility and embodied intimacy," but departs

[3] Walter provides one rare example of such work.

from established scholarship on EDM culture, dance, and affect to "go beyond the representation of tactility in lyrics and visual imagery, turning instead to the sound of EDM itself, which foregrounds percussion, texture, grain, and other sonic elements that resonate with heightened haptic experience" (60). His attention to the tactility of sound resonates with a study of queer affect in the hip-hop scene, as hip-hop lyrics have often included homophobic and sexist language, yet still are played in queer spaces where affinities develop with the music and between dancers. A study of queer hip-hop practices, therefore, cannot rely solely on the lyrical content of songs in order to understand their appeal to queer audiences, but must address the sonic tactility of hip-hop music played in queer spaces. Perhaps this is best highlighted by the fact that many queer, Palestinian youth who attend hip-hop shows do not listen to hip-hop regularly at home, but go to the shows because of the kin(a)esthetic practices found therein.

Hip-hop event attendees come together to dance in ways that reflect a relationship between the built and sonic environment, the socio-cultural meanings attached to the event, and the tactility of sound. Humans display a relatively unique ability for beat induction, the ability to extract a beat pattern from a complex array of sounds, an ability rarely identified in other species.[4] By extension, humans express the ability to entrain, a term emerging from biomusicology, referring to the synchronization of internal and external beat patterns, such as that between one's own bodily rhythms and the music being played, or between oneself, other dancers, and the music. Hagen and Bryant argue that the ability to engage beat induction and entrainment served an evolutionary purpose for humans, and, more specifically, that dance and music form a basis for human cooperation, an insight more specifically evidenced by this discussion of dance as an erotic, queer affinity forming practice.

More than a biologically determined expression, however, dance practices depend on both beat induction/entrainment and particular socio-cultural meanings attached to the music. Within hip-hop venues, there are styles of dance and specific moves that are more common, such as grinding with a partner or raising one's arms to correspond with and express approval of the music. When practiced in large, group settings, these dance moves serve as the basis for inter-subjective entrainment and, as per Hagen and Bryant, human cooperation. Though not everyone dances in the exact same fashion, the cooperative practice of entraining with the music is affective, providing a tactile, kin(a)esthetic basis for affinities between dancers. Carla Walter's work on hip-hop dance practices suggest that they are "a function of identity construction" (1), a suggestion that offers space for theorizing the queer potential of dance in hip-hop venues. The practice of grinding between two or more dancers is one example of the relationship between the socio-cultural meanings attached to particular musical genres, the inter-subjective practice of dance as beat induction and entrainment, and the embodied, kin(a)esthetic performance of identity. Thus, dance practices figure heavily in the ability for hip-hop partygoers to co-construct hip-hop spaces in ways that simultaneously support queer hegemonic and hetero-/gender-normative mobility-visibility regimes.

[4] Patel et al. suggest an initial framework for identifying entrainment practices in nonhuman animals.

Though only an initial sketch of the multiplicity of practices that (in)form Palestinian hip-hop culture, this essay's discussion offers insights into the roles of going out and of secluded publics in queer social life in Haifa which gesture towards new directions for a body of Middle Eastern queer theory that militates against cultural imperialism, orientalism, racism, and homonormativity. Western queer scholarship can lend coming out a culturally imperialist, epistemic monopoly on theorizing queer social life, complementing discursive and representational notions of (gay/lesbian) community. By contrast, this discussion aligns with decolonial queer scholarship, attempting a move away from a reliance on such representational strategies, avoiding a stable or essentialist rendering of "queer community" or "hip-hop culture", and focusing instead on practices of going out that cultivate queer affinities in the secluded publics of hip-hop spaces. This essay moves towards such a notion of affinity, grounded in a material analysis of embodiment and embededness in Palestinian queer social life.

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